

and thus increase the amount of the offset.

**§ 19.4 Notice requirement before offset.**

A request for a reduction of an IRS tax refund will be made only after the DOC makes a determination that an amount is owed and past-due and provides the debtor with sixty (60) days written notice. The DOC's notice of intention to collect by IRS tax refund offset (Notice of Intent) will include:

- (a) The amount of the debt;
- (b) A statement that unless the debt is repaid within sixty (60) days from the date of the DOC's Notice of Intent, DOC intends to collect the debt by requesting that the IRS reduce any amounts payable to the debtor as refunds of Federal taxes paid by an amount equal to the amount of the debt plus accumulated interest and other charges;
- (c) A statement that the debtor has the right to present evidence that all or part of the debt is not past-due or legally enforceable;
- (d) A mailing address for forwarding any written correspondence and a contact name and phone number for any questions.

**§ 19.5 Review within the Department.**

(a) *Notification by debtor.* A debtor who receives a Notice of Intent has the right to present evidence that all or part of the debt is not past-due or not legally enforceable. To exercise this right, the debtor must:

- (1) Send a written request for a review of the evidence to the address provided in the notice.
  - (2) State in the request the amount disputed and the reasons why the debtor believes that the debt is not past-due or legally enforceable.
  - (3) Include in the request any documents which the debtor wishes to be considered or state that additional information will be submitted within the remainder of the sixty (60) day period.
- (b) *Submission of evidence.* The debtor may submit evidence showing that all or part of the debt is not past-due or not legally enforceable along with the notification required by paragraph (a) of this section. Failure to submit the notification and evidence within sixty

(60) days will result in an automatic referral of the debt to the IRS without further action by the DOC.

(c) *Review of the evidence.* DOC will consider all available evidence related to the debt. Within 30 days of the debtor's complete and timely response, if feasible, DOC will notify the debtor whether DOC has sustained, amended, or canceled its determination that the debt is past-due and legally enforceable.

**§ 19.6 Departmental determination.**

(a) Following review of the evidence, DOC will issue a written decision which will include the supporting rationale for the decision.

(b) If DOC either sustains or amends its determination, it shall notify the debtor of its intent to refer the debt to the IRS for offset against the debtor's Federal income tax refund. If DOC cancels its original determination, the debt will not be referred to the IRS.

**§ 19.7 Stay of offset.**

If the debtor timely notifies the DOC that he or she is exercising the right described in § 19.5(a) and timely submits evidence in accordance with § 19.5(b), any notice to the IRS will be stayed until the issuance of a written decision which sustains or amends the DOC's original determination.

**PART 20—NONDISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF AGE IN PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES RECEIVING FEDERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

**Subpart A—General**

Sec.

- 20.1 The purpose of DOC's age discrimination regulations.
- 20.2 Programs or activities to which these regulations apply.
- 20.3 Definitions.

**Subpart B—Standards for Determining Age Discrimination**

- 20.4 Rules against age discrimination.
- 20.5 Exceptions to the rules.
- 20.6 Burden of proof.

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### Subpart C—Responsibilities of DOC Recipients

- 20.7 General responsibilities.
- 20.8 Notice to subrecipients.
- 20.9 Information requirements.

### Subpart D—Investigation, Conciliation, and Enforcement Procedures

- 20.10 Compliance reviews.
- 20.11 Complaints.
- 20.12 Mediation.
- 20.13 Investigation.
- 20.14 Prohibition against intimidation or retaliation.
- 20.15 Compliance procedure.
- 20.16 Hearings, decisions, post-termination proceedings.
- 20.17 Remedial action by recipients.
- 20.18 Alternative funds disbursement procedure.
- 20.19 Private lawsuits after exhaustion of administrative remedies.

AUTHORITY: Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, 42 U.S.C. sec. 6101 *et seq.* and the government-wide regulations implementing the Act, 45 CFR Part 90.

SOURCE: 51 FR 28926, Aug. 13, 1986, unless otherwise noted.

EDITORIAL NOTE: Nomenclature changes to part 20 appear at 68 FR 51355, Aug. 26, 2003.

## Subpart A—General

### § 20.1 The purpose of DOC's age discrimination regulations.

The purpose of these regulations is to set out DOC's policies and procedures under the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and the general age discrimination regulations at 45 CFR Part 90. The Act and the general regulations prohibit discrimination on the basis of age in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance. The Act and the general regulations permit federally assisted programs or activities, and recipients of Federal funds, to continue to use age distinctions and factors other than age which meet the requirements of the Act and its implementing regulations.

### § 20.2 Programs or activities to which these regulations apply.

(a) The Act and these regulations apply to each DOC recipient and to each program or activity operated by the recipient which receives Federal financial assistance provided by any entity of DOC.

(b) The Act and these regulations do not apply to:

(1) An age distinction contained in that part of a Federal, State, or local statute or ordinance adopted by an elected, general purpose legislative body which:

(i) Provides benefits or assistance to persons based on age; or

(ii) Establishes criteria for participation in age-related terms; or

(iii) Describes intended beneficiaries or target groups in age-related terms.

(2) Any employment practice or any employer, employment agency, labor organization, or any labor-management joint apprenticeship training program, except for any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance for public service employment.

### § 20.3 Definitions.

As used in these regulations, the following terms are defined as follows:

(a) *Act* means the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended (Title III of Pub. L. 94-135).

(b) *Action* means any act, activity, policy, rule, standard, or method of administration; or the use of any policy, rule, standard, or method of administration.

(c) *Age* means how old a person is, or the number of years from the date of a person's birth.

(d) *Age distinction* means any action using age or an age-related term.

(e) *Age-related term* means a word or words which necessarily imply a particular age or range of ages (for example: "children," "adult," "older persons," but not "student").

(f) *Agency* means a Federal department or agency that is empowered to extend financial assistance.

(g) *DOC* means the U.S. Department of Commerce.

(h) *Federal financial assistance* means any grant, entitlement, loan, cooperative agreement, contract (other than a procurement contract or a contract of insurance or guaranty), or any other arrangement by which the agency provides or otherwise makes available assistance in the form of:

(1) Funds; or

(2) Services of Federal personnel; or

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(3) Real and personal property or any interest in or use of property, including:

(i) Transfers or leases of property for less than fair market value or for reduced considerations; and

(ii) Proceeds from a subsequent transfer or lease of property if the Federal share of its fair market value is not returned to the Federal Government.

(i) *Normal operation* means the operation of a program or activity without significant changes that would impair its ability to meet its objectives.

(j) *Program or activity* means all of the operations of any entity described in paragraphs (j)(1) through (4) of this section, any part of which is extended Federal financial assistance:

(1)(i) A department, agency, special purpose district, or other instrumentality of a State or of a local government; or

(ii) The entity of such State or local government that distributes such assistance and each such department or agency (and each other State or local government entity) to which the assistance is extended, in the case of assistance to a State or local government;

(2)(i) A college, university, or other postsecondary institution, or a public system of higher education; or

(ii) A local educational agency (as defined in 20 U.S.C. 7801), system of vocational education, or other school system;

(3)(i) An entire corporation, partnership, or other private organization, or an entire sole proprietorship—

(A) If assistance is extended to such corporation, partnership, private organization, or sole proprietorship as a whole; or

(B) Which is principally engaged in the business of providing education, health care, housing, social services, or parks and recreation; or

(ii) The entire plant or other comparable, geographically separate facility to which Federal financial assistance is extended, in the case of any other corporation, partnership, private organization, or sole proprietorship; or

(4) Any other entity which is established by two or more of the entities

described in paragraph (j)(1),(2), or (3) of this section.

(k) *Recipient* means any State or its political subdivision, any instrumentality of a State or its political subdivision, any public or private agency, institution, organization, or other entity, or any person to which Federal financial assistance is extended, directly or through another recipient. Recipient includes any successor, assignee, or transferee, but excludes the ultimate beneficiary of the assistance.

(l) *Secretary* means the Secretary of Commerce or his or her designee.

(m) *Statutory objective* means any purpose of a program or activity expressly stated in any Federal statute, State statute, or local statute or ordinance adopted by an elected, general purpose legislative body.

(n) *Subrecipient* means any of the entities in the definition of “recipient” to which a recipient extends or passes on Federal financial assistance. A subrecipient is generally regarded as a recipient of Federal financial assistance and has all the duties of a recipient in these regulations.

(o) *United States* means the fifty States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, Wake Island, the Canal Zone, the Northern Marianas, and the territories and possessions of the United States.

[51 FR 28926, Aug. 13, 1986, as amended at 68 FR 51354, Aug. 26, 2003]

### Subpart B—Standards for Determining Age Discrimination

#### § 20.4 Rules against age discrimination.

The rules stated in this section are limited by the exceptions contained in § 20.5.

(a) General rule: No person in the United States shall, on the basis of age, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

(b) Specific rules: A recipient may not, in any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance, directly or through contractual licensing, or other arrangements, use age

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distinctions or take any other actions which have the effect, on the basis of age, of:

(1) Excluding individuals from, denying them the benefits of, or subjecting them to discrimination under, a program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance, or

(2) Denying or limiting individuals in their opportunity to participate in any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

(c) The specific forms of age discrimination listed in paragraph (b) of this section do not necessarily constitute a complete list.

(d) If a recipient operating a program or activity provides special benefits to the elderly or to children, such use of age distinctions shall be presumed to be necessary to the normal operation of the program or activity, notwithstanding the provisions of § 20.5.

### § 20.5 Exceptions to the rules.

(a) *Normal operations or statutory objective of any program or activity.* A recipient is permitted to take an action otherwise prohibited by § 20.4 if the action reasonably considers age as a factor necessary to the normal operation or the achievement of any statutory objective of a program or activity. An action meets this standard if:

(1) Age is used as a measure or approximation of one or more other characteristics; and

(2) The other characteristic(s) must be measured or approximated in order for the normal operation of the program or activity to continue, or to achieve any statutory objective or the program or activity; and

(3) The other characteristic(s) can be reasonably measured or approximated by the use of age; and

(4) The other characteristic(s) are impractical to measure directly on an individual bases.

(b) *Reasonable factors other than age.* A recipient is permitted to take an action otherwise prohibited by § 20.4 which is based on a factor other than age, even though that action may have a disproportionate effect on persons of different ages. An action may be based on a factor other than age only if the factor bears a direct and substantial relationship to the normal operation of

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the program or activity or to the achievement of a statutory objective.

### § 20.6 Burden of proof.

The burden of proving that an age distinction or other action falls within the exceptions outlined in § 20.5 is on the recipient of Federal financial assistance.

## Subpart C—Responsibilities of DOC Recipients

### § 20.7 General responsibilities.

Each DOC recipient has primary responsibility to ensure that its programs or activities are in compliance with the Act, the general regulations, and these regulations, and shall take steps to eliminate violation of the Act.

(a) Each DOC recipient will provide an assurance that the program or activity for which it is receiving Federal financial assistance will be conducted in compliance with all requirements for the Act and these and other DOC regulations. A recipient also has responsibility to maintain records, provide information, and to afford DOC reasonable access to its records and facilities to the extent necessary to determine whether it is in compliance with the Act and these regulations.

(b) *Recipient assessment of age distinctions.* (1) To assess the recipient's compliance with the Act, DOC may, as part of a compliance review under § 20.10 or a complaint investigation under § 20.11, require a recipient employing the equivalent or 15 or more employees, to complete, in a manner specified by the responsible Department official, a written self-evaluation of any age distinction imposed in its program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance from DOC.

(2) Whenever an assessment indicates a violation of the Act and the DOC regulations, the recipient shall take corrective action.

### § 20.8 Notice to subrecipients.

Where a recipient passes on Federal financial assistance from DOC to subrecipients, the recipient shall give subrecipients written notice of their obligations under the Act and these regulations.

**§ 20.9 Information requirements.**

Upon DOC's request, each recipient shall provide access and make information available for DOC to determine whether the recipient is complying with the Act and these regulations.

**Subpart D—Investigation, Conciliation, and Enforcement Procedures****§ 20.10 Compliance reviews.**

(a) DOC may conduct compliance reviews and pre-award reviews or use other similar procedures that will permit it to investigate and correct violations of the Act and these regulations. DOC may conduct such review even in the absence of a complaint against a recipient. The review may be as comprehensive as necessary to determine whether a violation of the Act and these regulations has occurred.

(b) If a compliance review of pre-award review indicates a violation of the Act or these regulations, DOC will attempt to achieve voluntary compliance with the Act. If voluntary compliance cannot be achieved, DOC will arrange for enforcement as described in § 20.15.

**§ 20.11 Complaints.**

(a) Any person, individually, or as a member of a class, or on behalf of others, may file a complaint with DOC alleging discrimination prohibited by the Act or these regulations based on an action occurring on or after July 1, 1979. A complainant shall file a complaint within 180 days from the date the complainant first had knowledge of the alleged act of discrimination. However, for good cause shown, DOC may extend this time limit.

(b) DOC will attempt to facilitate the filing of complaints wherever possible, including taking the following measures:

(1) Accepting as a sufficient complaint, any written statement which: identifies the parties involved and the date the complainant first had knowledge of the alleged violation; describes generally the action or practice complained of; and is signed by the complainant;

(2) Freely permitting a complainant to add information to the complaint to meet the requirements of a sufficient complaint;

(3) Considering as the filing date, the date on which a complaint is sufficient to be processed;

(4) Notifying the complainant and the recipient of their rights and obligations under the complaint procedure, including the right to have a representative at all stages of the process;

(5) Notifying the complainant and the recipient (or their representatives) of their right to contact DOC for information and assistance regarding the complaint resolution process.

(c) DOC will return to the complainant any complaint outside the jurisdiction of these regulations, and will state the reason(s) why it is outside the jurisdiction of these regulations.

**§ 20.12 Mediation.**

(a) DOC will refer to a mediation service designated by the Secretary all sufficient complaints that:

(1) Fall within the jurisdiction of the Act and these regulations, unless the age distinction complained of is clearly within an exception; and

(2) Contain all information necessary for further processing.

(b) Both the complainant and the recipient shall participate in the mediation process to the extent necessary to reach an agreement or to make an informed judgment that an agreement is not possible.

(c) If the complainant and the recipient reach an agreement, the mediator shall prepare a written statement of the agreement and have the complainant and the recipient sign it. The mediator shall send a copy of the agreement to DOC. DOC will take no further action on the complaint unless the complainant or the recipient fails to comply with the agreement.

(d) The mediator is required to protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of the mediation process. No mediator shall testify in any adjudicative proceeding, produce any document, or otherwise disclose any information obtained, in the course of the mediation process without prior approval of the head or the mediation service.

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(e) The mediation will proceed for a maximum of 60 days after a complaint is filed with DOC. Mediation ends if:

(1) 60 days elapse from the time DOC receives the complaint; *or*

(2) Prior to the end of that 60-day period, an agreement is reached; *or*

(3) Prior to the end of that 60-day period, the mediator determines that an agreement cannot be reached.

(f) The mediator shall return unresolved complaints to DOC.

## § 20.13 Investigation.

(a) Informal investigation:

(1) DOC will investigate complaints that are unresolved after mediation or are reopened because of a violation of a mediation agreement.

(2) As part of the initial investigation, DOC will use informal factfinding methods, including joint or separate discussions with the complainant and recipient, to establish the facts and, if possible, settle the complaint on terms that are mutually agreeable to the parties. DOC may seek the assistance of any involved State agency.

(3) DOC will put any agreement in writing and have it signed by the parties and an authorized official at DOC.

(4) The settlement shall not affect the operation of any other enforcement effort of DOC, including compliance reviews and investigation or other complaints which may involve the recipient.

(5) The settlement is not a finding of discrimination against a recipient.

(b) Formal investigation: If DOC cannot resolve the complaint through informal investigation, it will begin to develop formal findings through further investigation of the complaint. If the investigation indicates a violation of these regulations, DOC will attempt to obtain voluntary compliance. If DOC cannot obtain voluntary compliance, it will begin enforcement as described in § 8a.15.

## § 20.14 Prohibition against intimidation or retaliation.

A recipient may not engage in acts of intimidation or retaliation against any person who:

(a) Attempts to assert a right protected by the Act or these regulations; *or*

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(b) Cooperates in any mediation, investigation, hearing, or other part of DOC's investigation, conciliation, and enforcement process.

## § 20.15 Compliance procedure.

(a) DOC may enforce the Act and these regulations by:

(1) Terminating the Federal financial assistance to the recipient under the program or activity found to have violated the Act or these regulations. The determination of the recipient's violation may be made only after a recipient has had an opportunity for a hearing on the record before an administrative law judge. If a case is settled during mediation, or prior to hearing, Federal financial assistance to the program or activity will not be terminated.

(2) Any other means authorized by law including but not limited to:

(i) Referral to the Department of Justice for proceedings to enforce any rights of the United States or obligations of the recipient created by the Act or these regulations.

(ii) Use of any requirement of or referral to any Federal, State, or local government agency that will have the effect of correcting a violation of the Act or these regulations.

(b) DOC will limit any termination under this section to the particular recipient and particular program or activity or part of such program or activity DOC finds in violation of these regulations. DOC will not base any part of a termination on a finding with respect to any program or activity of the recipient which does not receive Federal financial assistance from DOC.

(c) DOC will take no action under paragraph (a) until:

(1) The head of the organization providing the financial assistance has advised the recipient of its failure to comply with the Act and these regulations and has determined that voluntary compliance cannot be obtained.

(2) Thirty days have elapsed after the Secretary has sent a written report of the circumstances and grounds of the action to the committees of the Congress having legislative jurisdiction over the program or activity involved.

The Secretary will file a report whenever any action is taken under paragraph (a).

(d) DOC also may defer granting new Federal financial assistance to a recipient when a hearing under § 20.16 is initiated.

(1) New Federal financial assistance from DOC includes all assistance for which DOC requires an application or approval, including renewal or continuation of existing activities, or authorization of new activities, during the deferral period. New Federal financial assistance from DOC does not include increases in funding as a result of changed computation of formula awards or assistance approved prior to the beginning of a hearing under § 20.16.

(2) DOC will not begin a deferral until the recipient has received a notice of an opportunity for a hearing under § 20.16. DOC will not continue a deferral for more than 60 days unless a hearing has begun within that time, or the time for beginning the hearing has been extended by mutual consent of the recipient and the head of the organization providing Federal financial assistance. DOC will not continue a deferral for more than 30 days after the close of the hearing, unless the hearing results in a finding against the recipient.

(3) DOC will limit any deferral to the particular recipient and particular program or activity or part of such program or activity DOC finds in violation of these regulations. DOC will not base any part of a deferral on a finding with respect to any program or activity of the recipient which does not, and would not in connection with the new funds, receive Federal financial assistance for DOC.

#### **§ 20.16 Hearings, decisions, post-termination proceedings.**

Certain DOC procedural provisions applicable to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 apply to DOC enforcement of these regulations. They are found in 15 CFR Part 8, § 8.12 and § 8.13.

#### **§ 20.17 Remedial action by recipients.**

(a) Where DOC finds that a recipient has discriminated on the basis of age, the recipient shall take any remedial

action that DOC may require to overcome the effects of the discrimination. If another recipient exercises control over the recipient that has discriminated, DOC may require both recipients to take remedial action.

(b) Even in the absence of a finding of discrimination, a recipient may take affirmative action to overcome the effects of conditions that resulted in limited participation in the recipient's program or activity on the basis of age.

#### **§ 20.18 Alternative funds disbursement procedure.**

(a) When, under the provisions of these regulations, DOC terminates the funding of a recipient, the Secretary may, using undisbursed funds from the terminated award, make a new award to an alternate recipient, i.e. any public or non-profit private organization or agency, or State or political subdivision of the State.

(b) The Secretary will require any alternate recipient to demonstrate:

(1) The ability to comply with these regulations; and

(2) The ability to achieve the goals of the Federal statute authorizing the Federal financial assistance.

#### **§ 20.19 Private lawsuits after exhaustion of administrative remedies.**

(a) A complainant may file a civil action following the exhaustion of administrative remedies under the Act. Administrative remedies are exhausted if:

(1) 180 days have elapsed since the complainant filed the complaint and DOC has made no finding with regard to the complaint; or

(2) DOC issues any finding in favor of the recipient.

(b) If DOC fails to make a finding within 180 days or issues a finding in favor of recipient, DOC shall:

(1) Promptly advise the complainant of this fact; and

(2) Advise the complainant of his or her right to bring civil action for injunctive relief; and

(3) Inform the complainant that:

(i) The complainant may bring a civil action only in a United States district court for the district in which the recipient is located or transacts business;

(ii) A complainant prevailing in a civil action has the right to be awarded

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the costs of the action, including reasonable attorney's fees, but that the complainant must demand these costs in the complaint;

(iii) Before commencing the action, the complainant shall give 30 days notice by registered mail to the Secretary, the Attorney General of the United States, and the recipient;

(iv) The notice shall contain the alleged violation of the Act, the relief requested, the court in which the complainant is bringing the action, and whether or not attorney's fees are demanded in the event the complainant prevails; and

(v) The complainant may not bring an action if the same alleged violation of the Act by the same recipient is the subject of a pending action in any court of the United States.

## PART 21—ADMINISTRATIVE OFFSET

### Sec.

- 21.1 Definitions.
- 21.2 Purpose and scope.
- 21.3 Department responsibilities.
- 21.4 Notification requirements before offset.
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- 21.6 Written agreement to repay debt.
- 21.7 Review of Department records related to the debt.
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- 21.9 Types of reviews.
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- 21.11 Determination of indebtedness.
- 21.12 Coordinating administrative offset within the Department and with other Federal agencies.
- 21.13 Procedures for administrative offset: single debts.
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- 21.15 Administrative offset against amounts payable from Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund.
- 21.16 Collection against a judgment.
- 21.17 Liquidation of collateral.
- 21.18 Collection in installments.
- 21.19 Additional administrative collection action.

AUTHORITY: 31 U.S.C. 3716; 4 CFR Part 102.

SOURCE: 51 FR 47005, Dec. 30, 1986, unless otherwise noted.

### § 21.1 Definitions.

For purposes of this subpart:

(a) The term *administrative offset* means satisfying a debt by withholding

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of money payable by the Department to, or held by the Department on behalf of a person, to satisfy a debt owed the Federal Government by that person.

(b) The term *person* includes individuals, businesses, organizations and other entities, but does not include any agency of the United States, or any State or local government.

(c) The terms *claim* and *debt* are deemed synonymous and interchangeable. They refer to an amount of money or property which has been determined by an appropriate agency official to be owed to the United States from any person, organization, or entity, except another Federal agency, a State or local government, or Indian Tribal Government.

(d) *Agency* means:

(1) An Executive department, military department, Government corporation, or independent establishment as defined in 5 U.S.C. 101, 102, 103, or 104, respectively.

(2) The United States Postal Service; or

(3) The Postal Rate Commission.

(e) *Debtor* means the same as "person."

(f) *Department* means the Department of Commerce.

(g) *Secretary* means the Secretary of the Department of Commerce.

(h) *Assistant Secretary for Administration* means the Assistant Secretary for Administration of the Department of Commerce.

(i) *United States* includes an "agency" of the United States.

(j) *Waiver* means the cancellation, remission, forgiveness, or non-recovery of a debt allegedly owed by a person to the United States.

(k) *Departmental unit* means an individual operating or administrative component within the Department of Commerce.

(l) *Departmental unit head* means the head of an individual operating or administrative component within the Department of Commerce responsible for debt collection.

(m) *Notice of Intent* means a demand notice sent by the Department to the debtor indicating not only the amount due, but also the Department's intent to offset all or some of the amount due